

BL  
80.2  
.R47  
1970

REPORT OF THE  
CONSULTATION ON INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE  
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO WORLD PEACE



## CONTENTS

Preface .....	3
A Few Words of Welcome—Dr. M. Doi.....	4
Message—Sir Z. Khan .....	6
The Progress and Promise of Inter-religious Dialogues	
—By Dr. S. J. Samartha .....	8
The Significance of Inter-religious Dialogue for World	
Peace—By Prof. Y. Iisaka.....	18
Resume of Opening Discussion.....	28
The Buddhist View of Inter-religious Dialogue	
—By Prof. M. Abe .....	32
Resume of Comments and Discussion Following .....	36
The Jewish View of Inter-religious Dialogue: A Spontaneous	
Presentation—By Prof. R. J. Werblowsky .....	40
Resume of Comments and Discussion Following .....	44
Inter-Faith Dialogue—By Dr. R. Panikkar .....	47
The Process of Drafting and Discussing the Statement .....	50
Final Statement .....	52
List of Participants.....	55

Theology Library

SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY  
AT CLAREMONT  
California



## PREFACE

A small consultation on inter-religious dialogue with special reference to the problems of peace was held in Kyoto, Japan, October 13-14, 1970, immediately prior to the World Conference on Religion and Peace. The consultation took advantage of the presence of delegates to this conference and other intellectual leaders of world religions in Kyoto to explore with colleagues in Japan the growing discipline and opportunities of inter-religious dialogue. The concern of the consultation was especially with the problems of peace and international relations and the relationship religious leaders have with this subject. Invitees from abroad were persons who were delegates to the following World Conference.

Sponsors of this conference were as follows: Oriens Institute for Religious Research(Tokyo), International Institute for the Study of Religions(Tokyo), Study Committee on "The Role of Religion in the Nineteen Seventies" (Kyoto), and the N.C.C. Center for the Study of Japanese Religions(Kyoto).



## A FEW WORDS OF WELCOME

*Masatoshi Doi*

Dear Friends!

I am very much honored to extend, on behalf of the sponsoring bodies, our hearty gratitude to all of you for sharing your precious time in attending this small consultation. In the famous Confucian Analects we find this statement: "What a joy it is to have friends coming from distant quarters!" This joy of ours is now fulfilled having about thirty distinguished scholars assembled here from all parts of the world.

This consultation is unique in the sense that it is a meeting of those scholars who are especially interested and experienced in the matter of inter-religious dialogue. It is also unique in that six major world religions are represented in it, i.e., Buddhism, Hinduisim, Islam, Judaism, Shintoism, and Christianity. It is really multilateral. We have made it intentionally small in scale so that we may have wider and deeper contacts with each other.

It provides a rare opportunity to cherish fellowship among men of different religions on a scholarly level. But, all of us know that we are not here just for the sake of fellowship. We are assembled here to grapple with some more important task, the task of probing into the theological basis for and the implications of inter-religious dialogue and cooperation, and of finding, if possible, some guidelines for the forthcoming World Conference on Religion and Peace, which in itself is a great occasion of inter-religious dialogue and cooperation. This means that we are not here just for the sake of academic exercise. Rather,



we are confronted with the Divine Imperative of promoting world peace. Our consultation will become really meaningful only if we are engaged in dialogue with the keen consciousness of this historical context.

The time of the consultation is too short to be very productive, I am afraid. Still, our sincere desire is that some new dimension or perspective be envisaged through our sincere engagement in discussions. So, my humble petition is this: let every one of us be frankly involved in the whole course of discussion. Finally, I must express our heartfelt gratitude to the Secretariat of the World Conference on Religion and Peace which has given us continued encouragement and all possible help. Thank you!



## MESSAGE

*Sir Zafrrulla Khan*

I feel greatly honored that you should have directed me to give a brief message this afternoon for the opening of our discussion and dialogue here. My message is a very brief one; it is one of reverence and reflection. Reverence for all that each of us reveres and considers sacred. It is obvious that we, in each of the disciplines from which we have come here, do not necessarily accept all that is held sacred and is revered by everyone else. If that were so, we would all belong to the same discipline. But it is essential that we should have not only what used to be described as tolerance for each others' beliefs but reverence for them, and that for a very simple reason.

It is taken for granted that, for instance, if I have a friend, I revere his father without even knowing him. I revere him because he is revered by my friend whose father he is. And in matters of faith and doctrine and in the sphere of religion, we must accept that what is sacred to us will be respected and revered by a friend, and what is sacred to him must be respected and revered by me. I must adopt the attitude that that which is worth reverence to me in my own discipline is worth reverence to my friend in his discipline, that he is as much devoted to his own ideals and to his own faith as I am devoted to mine and to my faith and that, therefore, I must respect and revere them.

This does not mean, as I have said earlier, that I accept them to the degree to which he accepts them, and that is where the second part of my message comes in: that we must put into effect in our dialogues and indeed all the time the faculty of reflection.



We must have, while completely sincere in our belief, a mind that is prepared to reflect upon any aspect of that which a brother regards as the truth. That is the only way of getting closer to each other. That is the only way of being utterly sincere in what we profess, and not when we approach whatever may be said by anybody else with a closed mind. The faculty of reflection among all of the other faculties is a divine gift, and it must be exercised in every sphere of our lives, equally in the sphere of religion.

So that is the message that I will leave with you that in our discussions today we should have an attitude of reverence towards each other and towards that which each of us hold sacred and worth revering and that we must reflect upon whatever every one of us has to contribute to the discussions.

Thank you very much.



# THE PROGRESS AND PROMISE OF INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUES

*By Dr. S. J. Samartha\**

Inter-religious dialogues have become increasingly frequent in recent years. In some countries bilateral conversations between people of different faiths have been going on for several years and, in spite of some difficulties, friendliness, goodwill and mutual confidence have been slowly growing. This naturally affects the relationship between religious communities in society. In some cases these conversations have been multi-lateral involving people of more than two religions. This is obviously necessary in countries which are multi-cultural and multi-religious where the attitudes of people of one community to those of the other depend, to a large extent, on the open or hidden assumptions of their respective faiths. Examples of bilateral or multilateral conversations may be given from India, Ceylon, Singapore, Japan, Korea, Indonesia, Britain and several countries in Europe and in America. People of different faiths—Hindus, Buddhists, Christians, Muslims, Jews and many others—including sometimes Marxists—have been involved in these conversations.

In addition to what is going on in particular countries several international gatherings have been held where men of different

---

\* Dr. S. J. Samartha of the Church of South India, formerly professor of Philosophy and History of Religions, is at present a Secretary in the Department on Studies, World Council of Churches, Geneva.



religions came together to consider specific issues. The Ajaltoun Consultation held in March 1970 brought together for the first time under the auspices of the World Council of Churches Hindus, Buddhists, Christians and Muslims to consider the theme "Dialogue between Men of Living Faiths - Present Discussions and Future Possibilities". (Copies of the Memorandum of this Consultation are available on request.) The Second Spiritual Summit Conference which met in Geneva in April 1970 was sponsored by the Temple of Understanding. Its focus was on the Practical Measures for Peace. It was attended by forty-four leaders of world religions and nearly sixty other participants from different countries. The Kyoto World Conference on Religion and Peace, to be held October 1970, will involve nearly three hundred delegates related to the religions of the world and will consider the question of peace in relation to three topics: Disarmament, Development and Human Rights.

While recognizing the progress made in inter-religious understanding one should be careful not to claim too much for what has been done so far or what may be possible in the coming years. The suspicion and distrust between religions and the memories of fanaticism, intolerance and persecution built up during centuries cannot be so quickly removed by a few conversations between individuals of different religions most of whom are academicians. The conflicts that are raging in certain parts of the world where the religious component stirs up memories of old conflicts, charges the emotions and intensifies the struggles cannot be ignored. What is happening in the Middle East between Jews, Christians and Muslims and in North Ireland between Roman Catholics and Protestants, what happens with such alarming-frequency in India and Pakistan between Hindus and Muslims



- to mention just a few places - should make us much more cautious in claiming too much too soon with reference to peace. Moats of separation cannot be too quickly transformed into bridges of reconciliation. Further, a great deal of patient work has yet to be done in clarifying fundamental concepts and attitudes if inter-religious relationships should be built on a more lasting basis than a mere desire for friendliness. With tremendous differences in historical and cultural backgrounds such fundamental terms as God, religion, faith, grace, salvation etc., are liable to be understood in very different ways so that even while we may use the same terms their content, power and direction may be very different. This, of course, is not to minimise the importance of continuing dialogues between men of different faiths but merely a word of caution to note that these are, at the moment, rather fragile and tentative attempts that should be regarded as modest and experimental beginnings that need to be carefully nurtured before expecting more tangible results.

There is, however, a tremendous interest everywhere in inter-religious dialogues. The enquiries that come in about such meetings, the press coverage of international religious gatherings—not just by religious magazines but by the secular news media including the TV—, the enthusiasm with which those invited participate in the programme and the seriousness with which the reports and publications coming out of inter-religious dialogues are studied indicate that there is a certain *expectation* on the part of the world as to the outcome of inter-religious dialogues. Therefore, those who are involved in planning and working for such dialogues should by no means ignore the possibilities they open up in human relations. There are several reasons why



inter-religious dialogues have come into increasing prominence during recent years. The following seem to be some of the major ones:

First, in the post-colonial years political independence has brought into sharper focus the cultural plurality within the nations of Asia and Africa. In many of these countries religious values are integrally bound up with the cultural heritage and therefore cultural renaissance and religious revival are closely related. But where religions divide people into different communities and where political alignments tend to follow religious affiliations it is felt that inter-religious dialogues can help to bring people closer together.

Second, it is being increasingly recognised that in the urgent task of nation-building and social renewal there are certain human concerns which are common to all people irrespective of their religious affiliations. Inter-religious dialogues can help in this task by challenging people of different religions to bring in the perspectives of their faiths to solve some of these common problems. What is necessary at present is not competition but co-operation between men of different faiths in the task of nation building.

Third, there are many who question the assumption that secularisation has swept away religions from the high roads of modern life. The conclusion that it is only a matter of time before the rising tide of science, technology and industrialisation will make religion an obsolete category in human life is incorrect. Apart from an artificial distinction between the sacred and the secular which destroys the unity of life and a narrow notion of religion which hardly takes into account the more comprehensive understanding of 'religion' in certain cultures it does not do



sufficient justice to the persistent power of religions nor to the signs of the emergence of the sacred even in countries which are highly industrialised and 'secularised'.

Japan, for example, though the most literate and most highly advanced country in Asia in science, technology and industrialisation, has seen the birth of more than 500 religions since World War II. The persistence of traditional religions in Asia and Africa and the restatement of certain religious values to meet modern needs are also points that cannot be ignored. In many countries of the West, particularly in Europe and America, there is a revival of interest in the religions of the East and a quest for the sacred. Referring to this a *Life* magazine article says, "Never before has a single society taken up such a wide range of religions and near-religious systems at once. A variety of Eastern religions have attracted individual followers and even whole congregations". (*Life*, February 2/1970, "The Quest for Spiritual Survival".) People who are dissatisfied with the consequence of secularism and alarmed at the influence of technology on human life seem to be looking for signs of the sacred that are deep and mysterious, authentic, significant and persistent which can give direction to and shape the quality of human life. In this context therefore, inter-religious dialogues involving people from the East and the West are of particular importance.

Fourth, there is a further factor to which dialogue draws a much needed attention. This is the area of *personal* relationships in which people meet. The phenomenological study of religion concentrates on religious *concepts* and too often the adequacy of a religion is judged by a theoretical consideration of its *ideas*. But a religion is much more than its creeds formulated in particu-



lar categories. There can be no dialogue between religions; dialogue can only be between *people of living faiths*. This does not minimise the need for careful theological discussion of religious concepts nor ignore the different levels in which dialogues may be conducted. But one of the most important lessons those who have participated in dialogues have learnt is that it is within the context of personal relationships that dialogues can most profitably be carried out. Dialogue, surely, is much more than just a talking activity; it involves larger relationships of living together and working together. Informed understanding, critical appreciation and balanced judgement—these cannot arise except where people meet in friendliness and trust, in openness and commitment. Faster means of communication, rapid means of transportation and the possibilities open to people, particularly young people, to break through the middle walls of partition open up fresh opportunities for dialogue on the world level.

It is likely that in the coming years there will be more and more attempts both at the national and the inter-national level to promote dialogues between people of different faiths. It is therefore important that in the light of experience gained so far we should avoid those lines which are liable to lead to confusion but strengthen those which are likely to be more creative. It would be most unwise and disastrous to build up 'a common religious front against the forces of materialism'. That should not be the open or hidden purpose of dialogue. One should not forget that institutional religions themselves have vested interests and have become and can become instruments of oppression and intolerance. Great care should be taken lest religions are used as tools for further dividing people. Too



often, religions have allied themselves with existing political structures, economic systems and social patterns and have resisted change in the name of tradition. Prophetic criticism of unjust social structures has seldom come from institutionalised religions that have become petrified in their traditions. Further, inter-religious dialogues should not lead to syncretism which may be described as a kind of 'fruit-salad' type of religion with little nutritional value. Syncretism is an uncritical mixture of different religions. It leads to spiritual impoverishment, theological confusion and ethical impotence. To eliminate fundamental differences between religions in the interests of a shallow friendliness would be foolish. Therefore, the desire to come together in dialogue should not obscure the integrity of particular faiths. Moreover, inter-religious dialogues should not be used by any of the participants as a subtle tool for 'mission', that is to promote the interests of one particular faith to the detriment of others. This does not mean that the partners should hide the essential demands of their particular faiths, for that would go against genuine openness. It would be wrong, for example, to ignore that Buddhism, Christianity and Islam are all deeply involved in 'mission' which is integral to these faiths. Now Hinduism also is involved in 'mission'. To deny or to ignore this would be to take the oil out of their lamps. But what is of critical importance today is how men, committed to each of these faiths, could practice 'mission' in a multi-religious world without destroying the very peace which they all seek to promote through dialogue.

What are some of the positive guidelines that may be suggested for inter-religious dialogues that may happen with increasing frequency in the coming years? The following may be consider-



ed as some tentative suggestions:

1. The basis of inter-religious dialogue is the *commitment* of all partners to their respective faiths and their *openness* to the insights of the others. The integrity of particular religions must be recognized.

2. The objective of dialogue is not a superficial consensus or the finding of the most acceptable common factor. It should not lead to the dilution of all convictions for the sake of false harmony. It must lead to the enrichment of all in the discovery of new dimensions of Truth.

3. Dialogue should not be limited to mere academic discussions on religious matters. It may begin among specially delegated people within a limited compass and later on spread into wider circles involving larger number of people. Living together in dialogue should help communities—particularly in multi-religious societies—to shed their fear and distrust of each other and to build up mutual trust and confidence.

4. It is important to emphasise that dialogue should be much wider than academic discussion of religious *ideas*. It is much more than verbal communication. Therefore other aspects of religion—the meaning of ritual, the significance of symbols and the experiences of devotion—should not be ignored. Respectful attendance at one another's worship may open up new and deeper levels of communication undreamt of before.

5. With reference to strengthening the efforts for peace the following points may be noted:

- (a) People of different religious persuasions should be brought together to consider *common human concerns* in which all are involved irrespective of their religious affiliations. These may be different in different countri-



es and social situations.

- (b) In the interest of justice and peace it is necessary for world religions to come out more openly on the side of the poor, the powerless and the oppressed. Mere quoting of Scriptures is not enough; it should be matched by deeds. Religious values that cannot be translated into social virtues are worse than useless where human needs are urgent. Inter-religious dialogues should promote deliberation and *action* on such common concerns.
- (c) World religious organisations should manifest greater concern to *work* for peace in particular situations where there are conflicts. Statements on international situations may be of less value than some “*symbolic actions*” by inter-religious groups in particular countries.

6. Inter-religious dialogues should also stress the need to study *fundamental questions* in the religious dimension of life. Religions are man's responses to the mystery of existence and quests for meaning in the midst of confusion. World religious organisations should support the long-range study of the deeper questions which today ought to be taken up not just *separately* by individuals of each religion, but also *together* in the larger interests of mankind.

I wish to conclude by quoting what I said in my report on the Ajaltoun Consultation in which people of four living faiths were involved and which to all participants was a new and rewarding experience in such dialogues on an international level. “It was not a group session of jelly-fishes where the line of demarcation is so blurred that it is difficult to see where one ends and the other begins. Nor was it a battle between porcupines rushing



out of their caves to push some quills into the bodies of the opponents, with painful consequences to all concerned. It was a meeting of people who were deeply committed to their respective faiths but who were also ready to enter into dialogue with others. For dialogue is more than just an encounter of commitments. Commitment involves both an assent and a question within oneself. The area between the 'I' and the 'thou', between 'we' and 'they', is an area of personal relationship between people sharing the burden and joy of existence where genuine dialogue demands humility and love. Dialogue therefore is both an expression of faith and a sign of hope."

---

Paper presented at the *Consultation on Inter-Religious Dialogue*, Kyoto, Japan, October 13-14, 1970



# THE SIGNIFICANCE OF INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE FOR WORLD PEACE

*By Prof. Yoshiaki Iisaka*

## **1. A Common Concern**

The world today is getting smaller and smaller due to the so-called "annihilation of distance" made possible through the achievements of modern technology and secular culture. It is shrinking into a small province where every man's fate is closely related to that of every other man, so that no one can be indifferent to others. Oneness of mankind, once a lofty idea of imaginative minds, has come to be a tangible reality which ordinary people can easily grasp. They know that a contingent total nuclear exchange might involve all humanity on the face of the earth in a common doom. It is not an idle fantasy but a realistic threat for them. They feel united in fear rather than in hope. This existential situation in which the human race finds itself has posed a challenge to different religions of the world and has prompted them to come closer to each other and start inter-religious dialogue in quest for the peace of the world and the integrity of mankind. Thus, inter-religious dialogue in the contemporary world has been partly activated by those pressures outside religions which have awakened their consciences to the predicament of the human species.

Through this extraneous impact, the great religions of the world have come to ascertain their basic common elements. Among others, as is pointed out by Arnold Toynbee in his book



titled *Christianity Among the Religions of the World*, two elements are shared by them all. One is a belief that "man is not the spiritually highest presence known to man," that is, man's relationship with the ultimate or something beyond him will make man's nature and destiny manifest. Man ought to place himself in harmony with that spiritual presence in the universe that is spiritually greater than man. A second element is that all great religions share a feeling that man ought to take sides with good against evil. These two elements, that is, a concern with the ultimate and the moral imperative or ethical demand based upon this ultimate concern, are the common ground within which the religions of the world encounter each other. They will be united in the understanding that peace in its deepest sense is man's being in harmony with, or in right relation to, the Ultimate Being. Secular ideologies lack this dimension of the Ultimate Concern, even though they show a certain moral orientation. Some religions are concerned only with mysterious or ritual union with the Ultimate, so that they tend to be careless of the ethical implications of this union. The mystic's union with God so often leads to moral indifference. Thus, when religions meet together in the quest for world peace, they have to recognize the ground upon which they stand in common, the ground where transcendence or the ultimate concern is related to immanence or the immediate ethical concern in an inseparable manner. *Spannungsfeld* or the field of tension between faith and action, theology and ethics, when to meditate and when to do, is our meeting place. Inter-religious dialogue can take place only on this ground.

Some of us here, according to our religious traditions, may be more concerned with the meditative, quietist, sacramental



approach to the problem of peace, putting much emphasis on peace within, while others are more concerned with the ethical, activist, organizational approach to the problem of peace in the world without. Because of this difference in emphasis and approach, we do need a dialogue between religions which implies a process of giving and taking, a process of self-examination and self-criticism. We have to expose ourselves to doubt and anxiety, through which we hope we may come to a clearer understanding of our mission for peace.

## **II. The Terms and Presuppositions of Dialogue**

A common concern must underlie, if inter-religious dialogue is to be fruitfully conducted. Even though religions cannot always speak a common language, the underlying common concern for peace and humanity may overcome this language barrier, because expressed language is only one means of communication among religions as well as among men of diverse racial, national, cultural and other backgrounds.

Difficulties in inter-religious dialogue so far have been derived from each religion's claim to absoluteness and monopoly of truth and justice, its exclusiveness and resultant crusading spirit, its sense of messianic mission, its rivalry in propagation and proselytization and so forth. With these premises, dogma easily leads to dogmatism by absolutizing its own position. The universality and absoluteness of the Ultimate Reality, which is the unchangeable yardstick with which to measure any historical religion and in terms of which even the religion which acknowledges this Ultimate Reality as its true and only God has to come under judgement, easily tends to be confounded with an historical manifestation of organized religion of a particular kind, thus



elevating the organized religion itself unwittingly to the position of the Ultimate Reality. When a certain religion proclaims God's judgement, it must confess that it is also subject to the judgement, and this confession makes God and His judgement truly universal.

Preparation for dialogue must start with contrition and confirmation of common concerns to be shared by different religions. Peace, in the sense of man's being in harmony with the Ultimate One, is certainly such a common concern for any religion of the world.

One short-cut approach to inter-religious dialogue is to conduct it on the level of religious philosophy or so-called comparative religion. At best, this approach is, so to speak, an effort to try to communicate through a medium of religious Esperanto, an artificially manufactured common language of simple nature, at the cost of each religion's rich and unique traditions and historical identity. It may make a communication of expediency but never inter-religious dialogue in its fullest sense. It aims to elicit a lowest common denominator and the broadest generalizations. It may become a religious cosmopolitanism but never a religious internationalism which makes possible a dialectical process of enriching each individual religion's identity as well as the fellowship of religions.

The philosophy of religion is a monologue lacking in a revelatory element indispensable to religious faith. Comparative religion is a discipline of science and, as such, it has to be distinguished from religious faith. Religion or faith expresses a different dimension from that of philosophy and science. Religious dialogue is a dialogue among men of living faiths, but not that among academicians and dilettanti. Philosophy and science



may render a service for religious dialogue but can never supersede living faiths which give life to religious dialogue. Thus, the philosophy of religion and comparative religion approach to inter-religious dialogue can only be a supplementary means.

Then, what are the presuppositions of true inter-religious dialogue through which a creative encounter among religions takes place? At this point, Paul Tillich is very helpful, I would say. In his book *Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions*, he points out those presuppositions for inter-religious dialogue as follows. I will summarize them in my own words.

Such a dialogue (inter-religious dialogue) first presupposes that the participants of dialogue acknowledge the value of each others' religious conviction so that they consider the dialogue worthwhile. Secondly, each of them must be able to represent his own religious basis with conviction so that the dialogue is a serious confrontation. Thirdly, the dialogue presupposes a common ground which makes both dialogue and conflicts possible, and fourthly, every side must be open to criticisms directed against his own religious basis.

These presuppositions are, after all, those upon which a man as a person meets, encounters with, another man respecting his unique individuality and affirming their common humanity. While each is being true to himself, all have to stand on a common ground which makes not only acceptance and agreements, but also rejection and conflicts, possible. The important part of this common ground is a basic concern for humanity which is tantamount to a concern for peace.

### **III. Peace in Religious Understanding**

To grasp the religious implications of peace, it will be helpful



to reflect upon the Judeo-Christian interpretation of peace, *shalom* and *eirene*. *Shalom* in its original sense is said to represent completeness, perfection, or perfect harmony. Peace is not a negative and static state of not-war, but a positive, dynamic concept of living together in harmony and fellowship. A state of not-war is a minimal condition for peace, but not a sufficient one. Peace understood in this positive sense of being in perfect harmony has a four-fold dimension. First, peace is referring to man's relationship with God. Reconciliation, regaining of lost harmony for man through God's grace, is peace in its ultimate form. This transcendental or vertical aspect of peace is fully comprehended by those who have concerns for the ultimate reality, by those who quest for the ultimate meaning of life. It is the *par excellence* religious dimension of peace which secular ideologies cannot understand. To establish a harmonious relationship with God may be translated into the life situation of this world, assuming three different but related-to-each-other levels. Reconciliation with God will be overtly expressed in man's reconciliation with himself, man's reconciliation with his fellowmen, and man's reconciliation with Nature.

The transcendental religious dimension of peace may be expressed by different terms such as *Nirvana*, Eternal Life, the Kingdom of God, etc. It has been a most appropriate subject of dialogue between Buddhism and Christianity in the past. The imperishable nature of man has to be reaffirmed in the presence of an onslaught of secular ideologies which degrade man's dignity and its transcendental root.

Man's reconciliation with himself has been a much discussed subject in religions and philosophies. In religious terms, it is the emancipation from one's sin, overcoming of one's self-center-



edness, the state of a new man, etc. In philosophy it is the problem of self-alienation and self-realization. Recently, psychology and psychoanalysis have come to grapple with neurosis and related problems which imply conflicts within oneself. To deal with this aspect of peace, religion has been and is able to converse and cooperate with these secular disciplines. The horizon for religion has been extensively widened in this cooperative work.

Man's reconciliation with his fellowmen means a peaceful and harmonious living together of men, freed from oppression, prejudice and anarchy. Marxism has been striving to emancipate man from political, economic and social oppressions. To achieve man's reconciliation with his fellowman, religion has been emphasizing the work of charity and social service. Today, however, it has come to realize the importance of direct social action which aims at social justice through the change of social structures. In this task, religion has to unite its conscientious concern for social justice with the insights into social realities which are provided by the social sciences. A new dialogue is indispensable between religion and the social sciences in order to find out a new way of collaboration for establishing social justice which is the root of peace in society. In the field of social action, organized religions have been on the whole on the side of the *status quo* or, in some cases, even reactionary, identifying themselves with the privileged class or receding into a position of isolation and maintaining a ghettoist mentality. There is an urgent need for inter-religious dialogue on the problems of political witness and social action. Religion and politics cannot be confounded, but they should not be separated. Organized religions can make strong pressure groups to exert influence upon public policies. A new thinking on social action, responsi-



ble participation, readiness to cooperate with each other among religions and even with secular movements, so long as they stand for a common human concern, all these are badly needed by religions today.

Peace has to be established between man and Nature. Western religions and civilizations tend to have neglected this aspect of peace, especially since the introduction of modern technology. Nature has been thought to be a mere object of man's subjection, with devastating effects in the pollution of air and other contaminations of the environment. Thus, man is all the more alienated from Nature, and there is no harmony between man and Nature. On the other hand, certain religions worship Nature and deify it, so that man is left to the mercy of threatening Nature. Because of these different approaches to Nature, religions have to hold dialogue regarding this serious problem.

If religion tries to deal with the problem of peace in its comprehensive dimensions, it has to face the four-fold implications of peace so that man's reconciliation and self-realization can be complete. Peace is not only the condition for man's living together, but, in its highest sense, the state of man's full realization of himself in community with others.

#### **IV. Religious Cooperation for Peace**

Dialogue can only take place where life together starts. Religionists of different backgrounds can have a fruitful dialogue only where they live Truth before talking about it. Religious dialogue is realized not on the basis of academic or scientific exchange, but through existential confrontation and encounter, pointing to the root of life together, subjecting ourselves to mutual correction and edification.



The first stage of religious cooperation, accordingly, is to "come together." Religionists' conferences and consultations may have a symbolic meaning of "come and abide together" in a community of human concerns. Now, on the basis of remaining together, belonging to each other, a next stage of religious cooperation begins - "talking together," a process of dialogue. It will be followed by a higher stage of "working together," the original etymological meaning of "cooperation." Religious dialogue has to be action-oriented at its basis, and "working together" for others must be started. Working together may, in turn, consolidate and have an impact on the process of dialogue. Dialectical process will be set in motion between dialogical and operational dimensions of religious cooperation. In this connection, the parable of the Good Samaritan is illuminating. Without extending any help urgently needed by the stricken man, a victim of robbery, a priest passed by. Because he felt so secure in his own religious tradition, he did not care about the fate of a man who belonged to a religion other than his own. Then the Good Samaritan came and made every effort to help the poor victim disregarding religious and racial differences because he was ready to help any human being in need. The priest and the Good Samaritan did belong to the same religion. Thus, a boundary line will be drawn, in this case, not between the stricken man and the Good Samaritan in spite of their difference of religion, but rather between the priest and the Good Samaritan belonging to the same religion.

The concern for humanity can and must overcome religious differences, while the lack of that concern will make dialogue impossible even among men of the same religion. Especially



today, human concern can best be translated into a concern for peace. It is a most appropriate ground upon which religious encounter, dialogue, and cooperation can work out a more humane society where each man's self-realization is the condition for that of every other man. Community, a "life together" on the basis of a unity of basic concern, will be the *telos* of religious dialogue, as peace, after all, signifies for religionists the highest form of community.



## RESUME OF OPENING DISCUSSION

The specific purpose of this consultation was stated as being an attempt to probe together into the implications of inter-religious dialogue and to work together on some guidelines for the relationship religions have with the issue of peace.

Participants then replied with their comments to the two papers which had been presented, i.e., Dr. Samartha's paper and prof. Iisaka's paper. It was stressed that the distinction between people lies not between people of different religions but between different styles within the same religion, a point which prof. Iisaka had made with his illustration of the Good Samaritan. The problem of getting into a field of ideas and, therefore, of language and semantics was discussed. It was stated that the critical thing in inter-religious dialogue is more than just mutual respect, but ultimately a readiness to have yourself called into question. In real inter-religious dialogue, it is necessary to open oneself up to a varied religious experience. The further point was made that after a dialogic encounter, it is also necessary to return to the people of your own religion and encourage them to engage in such experiences also.

After a short coffee break, the discussion resumed and the chairman, Dr. Malalasekera, reminded the Consultation members that the discussion was to deal not only with the issue of inter-religious dialogue, but with its relationship to the crisis of world peace.

Nevertheless, discussion members felt they must explore fur-



ther the guidelines for inter-religious dialogue and what it means in realistic terms. One participant stated that the reason for engaging in dialogue is to reach an understanding of the truth. Another participant said it is not to get more knowledge, but to get shocked from the life of other people, not to give knowledge to each other, but to "break into each other." He stated that when he encounters people of different religions, what he gets from them is to be more of himself and to influence by his way of being his community. As a Buddhist, his emphasis was on individual change in relation to community influence as the basic way to bring about peace. He felt we must also discuss the techniques of action, but only after such a dialogic encounter. A Moslem and a Hindu participant also disagreed with the statement that the purpose of dialogue is an understanding of the truth. They felt that it is rather to understand *truths* and the relationships between truths, common points and points of difference, and to foster respect for other persons.

The discussion then turned to the relationship with the issue of world peace. A Buddhist participant said that religion must take the responsibility for sufferings (e.g., the War in Vietnam), elaborating on a point in Dr. Samartha's paper. Actually, it is a religious attitude that has led to actual war in Vietnam. He stated that Communism and anti-communism are both religions. If a Christian in the U.S.A. gives money for work in Vietnam, but he is not aware of what the politicians in his country are doing to his oversimplified attitude to further the religion of anti-Communism, he is promoting further suffering of the people of Vietnam unaware. But, he stated, there are some Christians who have begun to look at the total political scene rather than the simplified one other American Christians



see. When some U.S. Christians think about Communists, they have an image of non-humans, and they feel opposing Communism is doing the work of God. Dialogue must free us from this kind of dogma in order to see Reality.

Some participants felt the Vietnamese Buddhist was generalizing about Americans and Christians and others cited examples of Christians who were more radical than Marxists. It was agreed that there is much inside work to be done by religions among their own members. It is important for each religion to delineate and affirm the values of what they mean by "mission" and "peace" in 1970. There must be a recognition of two levels of inter-religious dialogue: individual encounters and social encounters. In social dialogue, we need inter-religious collaboration (on an organizational level) for specific practical ends to be reached.

One Christian participant felt that a religious organization cannot work for peace because if you take an activist position, you will split the organization. He cited the example of the U.S.A. where this has happened to religious organizations within the last few years. He felt that religious organizations should not take an activist position but should rather stimulate its members to express their faith in practical activist way. Another Christian participant disagreed saying that religious organizations *must* work for peace and other social goals at the risk of splitting the organization. This is the only future for religion. The idea of peace was expanded to include many problems of today; overpopulation, pollution, hunger. It was stated that religious organizations should not be attached so much to dogma in dealing with these problems, but instead should see man as man rather than an instrument. It was then stated that it is



not organizations which are in dialogue today but followers of different religious traditions.

It was felt important to distinguish religion from ideology, particularly when our religious view becomes just a part of a total ideological view, as has happened in many places between Christianity and capitalism.

In answer to the question of whether it is possible for some religions to take a collective political position, a Buddhist participant answered that the Buddhist attitude is different somewhat. Buddhism may work as a stabilizing power, like underground water which may cut off the underground root of a social evil. However, he warned that the danger for Buddhism is that it may fall into quietism or indifference to social problems. He felt that Buddhism should not remain merely underground water. He felt that Buddhism should learn from Semitic religions about positive reaction towards a social problem and in the future use both approaches in fighting social evils.

A Hindu further elaborated that the influence of Christianity has had a fruitful effect on Hindus in this area goading "other-worldly" Hindus to relieve social ills. Likewise, the Hindu religion has had beneficial effects on Christianity as well.



# THE BUDDHIST VIEW OF INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

*By Prof. Masao Abe*

I will cover three topics regarding the Buddhist view of inter-religious dialogue:

- (1) The historical Buddhist attitude toward other religions.
- (2) Doctrinal and practical basis for inter-religious dialogue.
- (3) My own view of the Buddhist attitude toward inter-religious dialogue today.

(1)

Religious debates were traditionally part of Hindu training in India. Participants in these debates had to explain and define their faiths to each other. The debate was conducted like a contest and the loser had to follow the victor's religious belief. The Buddha won many converts in this way (through debating), but he did not disparage the faith of others or force them to follow him after he had won.

In the Uparisutra we find the story of the student of Mahabira who was sent to meet the Buddha and debate Karma with him. He lost the debate and wanted to follow the Buddha, but the Buddha asked him to reconsider his own faith. He persisted and the second time the Buddha accepted him as a student but asked him to keep following his faith as before.

Within this open attitude, however, the Buddha was very critical of and discarded views unfavorable to the way to enlightenment. He proclaimed the dharma as the way of deliverance.



King Ashoka of the Third Century, B.C., in India was devoted to the Buddha and supported the Sangha. He sent missionaries to other parts of the country, but he also honored and supported all religions and promoted dialogue among them.

By honoring others one exalts one's own faith, and vice versa. Through concord one learns the dharma accepted by others. Buddhist missionaries went to other lands in this spirit, and they accommodated themselves to the cultural milieu of each country. In Japan, Buddhism caused a struggle between the leading families who pledged allegiance to either Buddhism or Shintoism. However, Buddhism has peacefully spread throughout Asia.

(2)

In Buddhist doctrine the relativistic idea of recognizing truth in all religions stems from the doctrine of "dependent origination." Buddhism does not recognize any absolute independence from relative concepts. In Buddhism there is no idea of one God or special revelation. Buddhist thinking goes beyond the duality of absolute and relative into the experience of emptiness, suchness, and non-ego. Difference as it is is sameness and sameness as it is is difference. Buddhism takes the standpoint of no standpoint.

Liberal Christians admit the possibility of revelation in other faiths but believe that this is a general revelation and they, as Christians, experience a special revelation. The theology of Paul Tillich is a good example of what I am talking about here. However, in Buddhism every particular faith is relatively true; there exists no such exclusive criterion. Other faiths are not seen as false or less pure or privileged. However, this is not indiscriminate syncretism, for every particular faith is also considered to be relatively false. In fact, this Buddhistic at-



titude is a world-view and is applied to all reality, not just to religions. This attitude is enabled by the Buddhist's self-negation allowing him to make unbiased evaluations of other faiths.

Buddhism is not well-described by the term "tolerance," because this term implies self-affirmation. Buddhists can maintain a very critical attitude while at the same time not being exclusive. The Buddha encouraged students to examine his own words carefully. The result of this is a critical attitude combined with openness towards other religions.

(3)

The future of Buddhism in the field of inter-religious dialogue, as I see it today, includes an awakening to Truth through asking, knowing, seeing, exploring. In Buddhism doubt is not sinful; it is only ignorance which is sinful. The Truth to which one is awakened through this searching mind is non-ego or emptiness realized as reality or wisdom. Buddhism can contribute this awakening spirit to the field of inter-religious dialogue because commitment to Buddhism is not contradictory to openness.

In today's world there is indiscriminate acceptance of philosophies, religions, and ideologies due to a lack of this critical spirit. There is thus degeneration in Buddhism and commitment to the *status quo*. In today's Japan, due to a lack of critical spirit, Buddhism has become uncreative and ultraconservative and has become confined within its sect framework isolated from society.

The relationship of religions to political power and antireligious ideologies is the theme of the conference this week. Antireligious ideologies, including scientism, Marxism, and Nietzsche's nihilism, attack religion on an emotional and rational basis and are against the very existence of religion itself. These



ideologies, therefore, should be taken as part of the general problem of religion versus antireligion.

In dealing with these questions and challenges from antireligious ideologies and political powers, each religion must break through its patterns to reveal its pure qualities. The questions "what is man?" and "what is religion?" must be asked anew in this time. We must *critically* examine our own and other religions and find deeper ways to meet this challenge.



## RESUME OF COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION FOLLOWING

### **Comments by William P. Woodard:**

It seems to me that you have made relativity an absolute in your explanation of Buddhist thinking.

I don't like the word tolerance because there is a connotation of condescension in it. On the other hand tolerance is only possible to the degree that you have conviction. It seems to me that the Buddhist attitude of tolerance really amounts to indifference.

Also, I am troubled by the appearance in Japan of Soka Gakkai and Nichiren Buddhism which seem to be contrary to the real spirit of Buddhism. How do they fit into the picture you present?

Finally, is there room in your thinking for a person who does believe in absolutes?

### **Discussion:**

Some of the participants criticized Professor Abe's paper particularly regarding his use of the concepts relative and absolute. It was brought out that the ordinary non-philosophical mind does not distinguish the dharma from an absolute, although to the Buddhist the dharma is not under dependent origination and is itself the norm. Some participants were puzzled about whether there is true and false within Buddhism and felt if there were no standpoint, where would one stand to view his existence



and that of his society. It was suggested that perhaps the standard should be commitment rather than relative and absolute.

Professor Abe answered that conviction must be combined with openness to other faiths. He stated that the absolute in Buddhism is "emptiness" which is non-substantial, and a non-substantial absolute allows the faith to be open to others without contradiction to its own. The absolute in Buddhism is not an absolute as distinguished from relative. A true absolute must be free from the discrimination of absolute and relative. *Sunyata* is neither absolute nor relative; it means everything is interdependent. I maintain a critical acceptance of the truth of dependent origination because it is non-substantial (therefore, not closed).

Other Buddhists strengthened Professor Abe's point by saying that the problem of the absolute is that everything is changing, but the *assertion* that everything is changing cannot be included in the understanding that everything is changing. This kind of syllogism in Buddhism has its own effect and involves a new approach to the problem of absolutes. The idea of non-ego was the most important idea of the Buddha's time and constituted a revolt against the thinking of his contemporaries. His use of this concept was a means not an end. When Buddhism says emptiness, it equals the assertion that the absolute identity of a person does not exist; but because of emptiness, everything exists. The problem we have to deal with here is not the principle of the law of dependent origination but the implications for people's lives. Definitions limit the truth; it must be experienced not defined, and the truth is "that which is" which is the original definition of the word "dharma."

It was recognized that the discussion was here involved in a



problem of language - sensory language and matter language. It was stated that to a Moslem the state of the realization of the absolute is the point of the experience of the absolute, described as "ultimate blindness" or ultimate darkness or pure intuition. It was argued that logical positivism and semantics may not be able to be applied to religion, for there are two levels of truth: the scientific method and existential experience. However, it may not be possible to use empirical concepts to define religious realization at all.

Professor Abe elaborated further that emptiness is an existential and subjective truth. The ground of our existence cannot be objectified, therefore it is called emptiness. Religions must demonstrate their *raison d'être* in order for inter-religious dialogue to be productive in meeting today's needs. In answer to the problem of incompleteness or relativity, he said that in Buddhism the absolute cannot overcome incompleteness; it can never be overcome as it can in Christianity by the mercy of the Savior. In Buddhism the relative is the absolute.

Then in answer to the question, "Is there progress in your idea of Buddhism?," Ven. Thick Nhat Hanh replied that progress is the fruit of much practice of the faith, but complained that many Buddhists do not practice their faith well. He spoke of being alive in your religion no matter what "label" (Buddhist, Christian, etc.) you are wearing. He said inter-religious dialogue must be founded on the true experience of a living spirit in the participants and urged Buddhists to turn themselves on to true Buddhism and Christians to turn themselves on to true Christianity. He said he had met Christians who had a living spirit (which he saw as Buddhism), and a Christian stated he had met many people of other faiths with a living spirit which he



saw as Christianity.

Another Buddhist expanded this thought saying that in Buddhism there is no such thing as Buddhism. There is a system of beliefs, but these are not limited to Buddhism. The real point is the level of personal spiritual development. If we think of humanity as a whole, distinctions disappear, and this should be our aim. Boundaries and historical traditions of different religions are only significant culturally today in the fields of art, music, literature, and individual aesthetic appreciation.

The discussion was summed up by a Hindu with the story about Brahma and the Buddha. Brahma always tried to trap the Buddha into arguments but the Buddha was always practical and did not answer impractical questions. The Brahma was struck by this silence. The truth of *living reality* is what we are discussing and this cannot be caught by words. The Buddhists are asking us all to experience this reality and follow the path. Putting an end to suffering is the main point of the religions we represent here. Let us work on this rather than getting lost in a doctrinal discussion. No amount of theology has ever relieved the suffering of one person. If an understanding of religion helps me to understand another person better- or another society better - that is the point of my understanding. The oneness of our humanity must be recognized in spite of our following of different religions. Our *essential humanity* is our basic common point.



# THE JEWISH VIEW OF INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

## — A SPONTANEOUS PRESENTATION —

*By Prof. R.J. Zwi Werblowsky*

I have decided to respond this morning from immediate spontaneity out of this dialogic situation rather than presenting a formal paper. Last night we participated in an exercise in abstruse Buddhist scholasticism. Professor Abe described different ways of using absolute, some more conducive than others to openness. He said that the Buddhist absolute creates the possibility of openness which is not true in the Christian use of absolute. What is basic is whether we are using descriptive or prescriptive, normative categories. It is more important what people mean when they use words, not what do the words themselves mean.

The words Buddhism, Christianity, Judaism, etc., don't appear in any sacred text, but, nevertheless, a man's experience of ultimate reality crystallizes for him around Jesus, Buddha, etc., and creates an historical reality. The words Christian, Buddhist, etc., are merely ciphers or symbols.

Since I am a comparative religion teacher, I realize the limitations of that discipline. Comparative religion may not be legitimate in inter-religious dialogue, but I will use the comparative method to enable me to (1) avoid arbitrary prescriptions, i.e., not "Judaism says" but rather how Jews have reacted, developed, expressed themselves through history; and (2) assess the possibilities of dialogue in the future with other religions.



The world is pluralistic (we take this for granted) and should be (we say), therefore, exclusiveness is a bad thing. So the fashionable modern categories are commitment, etc. However, even here we are dealing with a pre-selective pluralism, e.g., only certain religions - "worthy religions" are included in this and the following conference. That is why I prefer the phrase dialogue of "living men of faiths," rather than dialogue of "men of living faiths," as others have put it in this consultation. In an acceptance of pluralism we sometimes say that "men prefer different composers, but all enjoy music." However, some religions say more is at stake than this. We must explore the relative adequacy of our alternative crutches - our language systems. The Sufi poets were concerned with the expressions of individual minds, but they also revealed the dynamism of religious movements.

As to this much-discussed concept of tolerance, there are different types of tolerance and intolerance. Actually, all of us are intolerant by nature. A baby is extremely intolerant and has to learn to build up relations with other things. We have to learn to tolerate others *and* ourselves. The three categories of intolerance are as follows:

- 1) practical and theoretical intolerance - Christianity is by its nature *dogmatically* or theoretically intolerant;
- 2) extensive and intensive intolerance - this can be seen in the identity of religion with nation-building where there is uniformity within a country but extensive tolerance;
- 3) formal and material intolerance - every religion has formal intolerance, even in China the concept that the three religions were one, i.e., Taoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, was disputed by Dogen.



The Biblical religion and Islam were a revolt against the ancient Semitic religions. They recognized that religion has national life, but Judaism added another element—that their God was the universal God. Ancient Judaism, therefore, was exclusive inherently from the beginning. The name of God was very important to them. It identified a specific identity; it was an affirmation of one thing and, necessarily, a denial of another thing. This is specific exclusiveness and shows the basic inbuilt dualism of Judaism.

In the prophet Micah's words we seem to find formal tolerance: "you worship your God and we'll worship ours." However, Judaism, as a nation, is intensively intolerant and only extensively tolerant. Therefore, Judaism is a national identity with a spiritual identity. Historically, there have been different interpretations and living of the faith, but the decisive thing is not the differences within history, because the people inside a tradition are not really aware of these differences.

The specific thing about Judaism is that there is a people with a future and past destiny within a spiritual framework. This thinking leads to exclusivism and theoretical intolerance. The relevance of all this today is that the Jew is caught between, on the positive side, his pluralistic attitude and, on the negative side, a theology of theoretical rejection of others. The problem is how to retain the tradition of pluralism while shedding the intransigence of theoretical intolerance. But this intolerance is theoretical. Only real particularistic people are real universalists and vice versa.

To achieve this tight-rope walking, we must engage in inter-religious dialogue with a philosophic basis. To carry on such a dialogue, we must resort to language, but the important thing



is, what value we actually attach to this language. The important thing is what the relationship of the language we use is to things we are aiming at. We must also keep in mind the relationship of one symbol system to another when we are conducting inter-religious dialogue.

We will always have confrontation and the problem of relating and translating between symbol systems in inter-religious dialogue. The relation of our symbol systems to reality cannot be really got at by dialogue. However, it is our experience of sameness and otherness which forces on us, as Jews within our exclusivist tradition, the necessity of dialogue. It is this experience of our common humanity and our ultimate isolation which impels Jews to dialogue with other religions.



## RESUME OF COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION FOLLOWING

### **Comments by Dr. K. L. S. Rao:**

Life is not so compartmentalized as you have made it with this categorization of intolerances; formal and material intolerances, etc., seep into each other.

Given the inherent intolerance in Judaism, how can a dialogue be carried on?

Please elaborate more about the spiritual dimension of Jewish nationalism, for that is a crucial point in today's world.

Practical tolerance is really not enough because it does not do justice to the other man; it will leave us still strangers at heart. The Asian religions feel that all religions are valuable because they have given consolation and helped people through life. It is true also that every religious system is in process, as we can see by our meeting here today. Practical necessity will eventually surmount theoretical differences between us; it is necessary that we get together.

Systems are built by minds of men. We must be careful not to sacrifice men for our notions and systems of the truth. In the West, so much emphasis has been placed on propositional truth (true or false); Asian epistemology is quite different. It's emphasis is on understanding truth in a more *living* sense.

Let's recognize that we all have crutches and need them; it is not necessary to change one's crutches.

### **Discussion:**

Dr. Werblowsky answered that his point was to open oneself



to the shock of encounter with other religions. Because of opening oneself to dialogue, there is a possibility one might change crutches. You must be prepared for all possible consequences of inter-religious dialogue. The crucial stage of inter-religious dialogue is worshipping together, and not just watching other worship but sharing in that worship.

As to nationalism, I relate to my Arab neighbor, said Werblowsky, first as an Arab and only secondly or thirdly as a Christian or Moslem. It was agreed, however, that religion is often very much involved in national conflicts.

There followed an exploration of the possibilities of conversion in Judaism. Dr. Werblowsky stated that historically Judaism knows conversion and the Book of Ruth justifies it. However, the understanding then was that the national, social, and religious sense were identical. Through secularization, these three were separated, but again may come together with the establishment of the State of Israel. However, the State of Israel includes an element of critical plurality of religions. Werblowsky said he did not believe there was any sense in conversion to Judaism, for in the traditional process religious conversion also involves naturalization (to a nation) and adoption into the "family" of Judaism.

The gap between symbol systems and reality or the possibility that different symbol systems are talking about the same reality was discussed. It was proposed that reality can only be lived not talked about. Judaism speaks in very concrete and anthropomorphic ways of God to drive home a specific lesson. The ancient Jews were not afraid of speaking in this way because they did have a basic, fundamental feeling of the otherness of God. It was stated that truth may be something more abstract than



reality. Thich Nhat Hanh said that he had felt an identity when Dr. Werblowsky was talking outside of the language he was using because of their common experiences of reality. He said a religious language must be spoken through religious reality. For instance, he was asked which part of Vietnam he was from, and after some reflection, answered from the "center." This is absurd scientifically but really reflected his reality.

Hanh went on to say that dialogue needs *comprendre* (the French word, to understand), which is etymologically composed of coming together, making two understandings one. This encounter is necessary for real dialogue. Comparative religion cannot approach this because it tends to treat religion as a science. The kind of dialogue involving comparative religion is important, but it is not real dialogue, which must involve living together.

Werblowsky summed up by saying that for real dialogue we must break through to the life of the other through listening, sharing, and living together. Since humans have intellect, we cannot ignore this activity of translating symbol systems. But comparative religion, he agreed, does not necessarily help religious dialogue. Comparative religion and religious dialogue are different in the same way that musicology is different from music. Sometimes comparative religion equips you for understanding the intellect of the other better, but the important thing is more than understanding.



# INTER-FAITH DIALOGUE

*By Dr. Raymond Panikkar\**

## **A. A terminological clarification**

- (1) There is only one faith and many beliefs. Beliefs are precisely the different expressions of faith.
- (2) Faith saves and cannot be put into words. It belongs to orthopraxy not to orthodoxy. It is more on the side of myth than of logos, though it participates in the two being the work of the spirit.
- (3) Beliefs are culturally bounded. They are dependent on particular cultures and yet have a constitutive claim to transcend them.
- (4) Every belief claims to be the right and true expression of faith so that from the point of view of belief, statement (1) is only acceptable under the assumption that the particular conception of faith given in a particular belief is the true one. This co-optation of faith into belief is a kind of transcendental character of every belief, because the *concept* of faith is no longer faith but already belief.
- (5) Religions are ways toward salvation. Ways imply a practical side requiring a certain commitment and rely on certain assumptions of an intellectual nature. Salvation is here under-

---

\* EDITOR'S NOTE: Dr. Panikkar had been invited to give comments on Prof. Abe's paper. However, he suddenly became ill in Tokyo and consequently was unable to attend the Consultation. He very kindly gave this paper to the editor following the Consultation, and we are forthwith including it in the Report of the Consultation.



stood as that which is considered to be the end, goal, destination or destiny of man, in whatever form it may be conceptualized. A man follows a particular religion because in it he believes he will find the ultimate fulfilment of his life. In the last analysis, there are as many religions as there are human beings. We could call religiousness this personal character of religion.

(6) Religions are sociological units grouping together a considerable number of religiousnesses according to a more or less homogeneous cultural pattern. In other words, religions are sociological units of beliefs, which amounts to saying that they are sociological groups of believers. It all depends where one puts the dividing line. Christianity can be considered as one religion, but equally so can Methodism or, for that matter, a single congregation of a particular Pentecostal sect.

(7) Religious dialogue means an exchange of views and insights by means of concepts expressed in words. It is based on the previous agreement of a certain common ground and tries to widen and deepen such a common ground so as to pinpoint the divergencies and find the locus where possible mutual influences or fecundations may take place.

(8) Any dialogue, the religious not excluded, is dependent on the cultural setting from which the partner speaks. To overlook the different cultures giving expression to the different religious beliefs is to face unavoidable misunderstandings. The first function of the dialogue is to prepare a solid ground where the proper dialogue may take place. The original common ground for the dialogue is what both sides take for granted and finds in the myth its appropriate expression. Another name for this myth is the rules of the game.

(9) No inter-religious dialogue can yield any fruit unless it is



(at least logically and anthropologically) done within the partners themselves. This intra-religious dialogue implies the critical awareness that my belief, though for me ultimate and even intentionally exhaustive, does not preclude a free interval or an intellectual perspective (thus a step back) from which my own belief may be seen, judged and even criticized. Furthermore, it implies that, though I do consider it the most complete expression of faith, it may well be the case that it allows for other relatively valid expressions and even that it makes room for an improvement within itself. In other words, only those are ready for a religious dialogue who can critically undergo an internal dialogue within themselves.

#### **B. Some Christian axioms**

- (1) Christ is the Lord, but the Lord is not only Jesus.
- (2) The Church is the organism of salvation (by definition), but the Church is not synonymous with the visible Christian Church.
- (3) Christendom is the socio-religious structure of Christianity and as such is a religion like any other religion which has to be judged on its own merits or demerits without any special privilege.
- (4) God wills that all men should reach salvation.
- (5) The means of salvation are provided by the religiousness of the person generally to be found in the religions of the world (old or new).
- (6) There is no salvation without faith, but this is not the privilege of Christians nor of any other special group.
- (7) Christ is the only mediator, but He is not the monopoly of Christians; and, in fact, he is efficient and present in any authentic religion under whatever form or name.



## THE PROCESS OF DRAFTING AND DISCUSSING THE STATEMENT

The discussion was opened for practical suggestions on how to foster inter-religious dialogue and peace. It was decided that the Consultation would prepare a concrete statement presenting the understanding of inter-religious dialogue that had evolved from their meeting and stating the religious perspectives they saw which could be brought to bear in the cause of peace.

It was decided that the statement should (1) be short, but meaningful, (2) make a real point, (3) evade platitudes, and (4) gear itself to the specific situation of world peace today. The following Drafting Committee of five was selected:

Dr. Joseph Spae, Chairman

Dr. K. L. Sheshagiri Rao

Dr. G. P. Malalasekera

Dr. S. J. Samartha

Dr. Masatoshi Doi, Ex-officio

When the Drafting Committee returned, they presented a statement which was then discussed and voted on item by item. It was decided that the ground rules for the voting should be (1) a show of hands and (2) a simple majority of the Consultation participants. Each paragraph was discussed, revised to reflect the discussion, then voted on. All the items in the final statement were passed by a considerably majority, often unanimously or with one or two abstentions.

The Consultation was adjourned with the charge of distributing this statement to the participants of the World Conference



on Religion and Peace and of actively working to actualize the resolutions of the statement.



# FINAL STATEMENT

## 1. Preamble

We, members of several of the religions of the world, have met at Kyoto, October 13-14, 1970, under the sponsorship of the Oriens Institute for Religious Research, the International Institute for the Study of Religions, the Study Committee on "The Role of Religion in the 1970's," and the NCC Center for the Study of Japanese Religions, to seek agreement in our understanding of the world, and, in particular, of our role toward the promotion of peace.

We are aware of the inevitable difficulties which beset all dialogue and cooperation between religions, nations and peoples: a sense of superiority, a lack of humility, a defensive attitude of self-righteousness. Yet we remain convinced that, in full loyalty to our respective beliefs and religious commitments, we can and should work together toward a better, more peaceful world.

To us peace is not an abstraction; it is a reality craved by all mankind. True peace is rooted in a social order which respects equality, liberty and justice among men; it thrives in an atmosphere which assigns priority to living man over traditions, ideologies, wealth and comfort.

We share the conviction that religions can and must play a creative role in imparting meaning and purpose to man in our changing world.

We believe that religions are a significant force for cultural integration and moral progress among their peoples insofar as they actively participate in a changing world, while maintaining



their heritage of moral and spiritual values.

## **2. Basis for Religious Dialogue**

Religious dialogue should not be limited to mere academic discussion. It may begin among small groups of people and later spread into wider circles. Living together in dialogue should help communities to shed their fear and distrust of each other and to build up mutual trust and confidence.

Religious dialogue will aim not at doctrinal agreement or organizational unity, but at a common commitment to our fellow men; it will be aided, therefore, not so much by confrontation of the religions with one another as by their common confrontation with the pressing problems of the world.

## **3. Suggestions**

We suggest that religions should play a prophetic and constructive role in the interpretation of the use of power, of technological advance and of many social movements which shape the future of the world.

We suggest that religions, in an effort to create the conditions for world peace and eliminate the causes of war, should attend to the problems faced by developing countries and by minorities in search for a new identity, for human dignity and for a legitimate share in the material spiritual goods of the world.

We suggest that, in the interests of justice and peace, religions should come out more positively on behalf of the poor, the powerless and the oppressed. Religious dialogue should promote deliberation and action on these and similar concerns.

We suggest that all religions should pay serious attention to present social change and examine their respective contributions



to that change, particularly in the matter of peace.

We suggest that there is need for cooperation among religions in their approach to the many problems which beset the world today and particularly for a study of the meaning of man and of the factors which contribute to his happiness and progress.

We suggest that all religions should encourage their members to study religions other than their own, to engage in dialogue and cooperation, and to exchange specialists in their institutions of higher learning.

We urge the religious leaders to take appropriate steps to form a liaison body to give concrete expression to the above suggestions.



## LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Prof. Masao Abe, Nara University of Education, Nara, Japan  
(B)

Dr. M. Ahmad, University of Karachi, Karachi 32, Pakistan  
(M)

Prof. Shōjun Bandō, Otani University, Kyoto, Japan (B)

Fr. Jan Van Bragt, Oriens Institute for Religious Research,  
Tokyo, Japan (C)

Dr. Masatoshi Doi, Director, NCC Center for the Study of  
Japanese Religions and Professor of Doshisha University,  
Kyoto, Japan (C)

Prof. Jikai Fujiyoshi, Hanazono University, Kyoto, Japan (B)

Ven. Thich Nhat Hanh, Phai Doan Phat Giao Viet Nam,  
Délégation de Paix de L'Église Bouddhique Unifiée du  
Vietnam, 11 Rue de la Goutte d'Or, Paris 18e, France (B)

Prof. Takashi Hirata, Hanazono University, Kyoto, Japan (B)

The Rev. W.M. Gluer, Christian Study Center on Chinese  
Religion and Culture, Hong Kong (C)

Prof. Yoshiaki Iisaka, Gakushūin University, Tokyo, Japan (C)

Dr. Homer A. Jack, Secretary General, World Conference of  
Religion for Peace, 777 United Nations Plaza, New York,  
New York 10017, U.S.A. (C)

Sir Zafrulla Khan, President, The International Court of  
Justice, Hague, Netherlands (M)

The Rev. Nanrei Kobori, Chief Abbot of Ryōkōin Temple,  
Daitokuji, Kyoto, Japan (B)

The Rev. Paul T. Kōchi, Priest of Momoyama Episcopal



- Church, Kyoto, Japan (C)
- Dr. G.P. Malalasekera, 12 Longden Terrace, Colombo 7,  
Ceylon (B)
- Prof. Katsumi Matsumura, Kwansei Gakuin University,  
Nishinomiya, Hyōgo, Japan (C)
- The Rev. Toshio Miyake, Chief Priest of Izuo Konkōkyō  
Church, Osaka, Japan (S)
- Prof. Kazuo Mutō, Kyoto University, Kyoto, Japan (C)
- Prof. Gadjin M. Nagao, Kyoto University, Kyoto, Japan (B)
- Dr. K.L. Sheshagiri Rao, Punjabi University, Patiala, Punjab,  
India (H)
- Dr. S.J. Samartha, World Council of Churches, Geneva, Swit-  
zerland (C)
- Dr. Joseph Spae, Director, Oriens Institute for Religious  
Research, Tokyo, Japan (C)
- Dr. Wilhelm Schiffer, Director of Research, International  
Institute for the Study of Religions, Tokyo, Japan (C)
- Prof. Masao Takenaka, Doshisha University, Kyoto, Japan (C)
- Dr. Yoshinori Takeuchi, Kyoto University, Kyoto, Japan (B)
- Prof. R.J. Zwi Werblowsky, The Hebrew University, Jerusa-  
lem, Israel (J)
- Dr. William P. Woodard, 457 N. Mountain Ave., Clare-  
mont, California, 91711, U.S.A. (C)

*Key:*

- |               |               |
|---------------|---------------|
| (B)—Buddhist  | (J)—Jewish    |
| (C)—Christian | (M)—Moslem    |
| (H)—Hindu     | (S)—Shintoist |

*Officers:*



Consultation Director:

Dr. Masatoshi Doi

Executive Committee:

Dr. Homer A. Jack

Dr. Joseph Spae

Dr. Bunyū Masutani

Rev. Toshio Miyake

Dr. Masatoshi Doi

*Sponsors :*

Oriens Institute for Religious Research

International Institute for the Study of Religions

Study Committee on "The Role of Religions in the Nineteen  
Seventies."

NCC Center for the Study of Japanese Religions



Any information about this Consultation will be available from:

Dr. Masatoshi Doi, Director

NCC Center for the Study of Japanese Religions

c/o Kyoto Diocese of Japan Episcopal Church

Karasuma-Shimotachiuri, Kamikyo-ku

Kyoto, Japan 602